



WORK INSTRUCTIONS ON OH&S PROGRAMME

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Basic OH&S Program Elements

What is an occupational health and safety (OH&S) program?

A health and safety program is a definite plan of action designed to prevent accidents and occupational diseases. Some form of a program is required under occupational health and safety legislation of the country. A health and safety program must include the elements required by the health and safety legislation as a minimum.

Because organizations differ, a program developed for one organization cannot necessarily be expected to meet the needs of another. This document summarizes the general elements of a health and safety program. This should help smaller organizations to develop programs to deal with their specific needs. The more comprehensive the program is, the more employee involvement can be expected.

What is a policy statement?

Occupational health and safety policy of Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. (PGCB) is a statement of principles and general rules that serve as guides for action. Senior management are committed to ensure that the policy is carried out with no exceptions. The health and safety policy have the same importance as the other policies of the organization.

The policy statement is brief, but it mentions:

- management's commitment to protect the safety and health of employees
- the objectives of the program
- the organization's basic health and safety philosophy
- who is accountable for occupational health and safety programs
- the general responsibilities of all employees
- that health and safety shall not be sacrificed for expediency
- that unacceptable performance of health and safety duties will not be tolerated

The policy is:

- stated in clear, unambiguous, and unequivocal terms
- signed by the Managing Director
- kept up-to-date
- communicated to each employee
- adhered to in all work activities

The occupational health and safety policy statement is given in page 6 section 4 (HSM-04) of HS Manual.

What are the program elements?

While organizations will have different needs and scope for specific elements required in their health and safety program, the following basic items should be considered in each case:

- Individual responsibility
- Joint occupational health and safety committee
- Health and safety rules
- Correct work procedures
- Employee orientation
- Training
- Workplace inspections
- Reporting and investigating accidents
- Emergency procedures
- Medical and first aid
- Health and safety promotion
- Workplace specific items

What are individual OH&S responsibilities?

Health and safety is the joint responsibility of management and employees. Management is accountable for non-compliance to health and safety legislation. All health and safety activities are based on specific individual responsibilities, most of which can be found in the pertinent legislation. However, often these duties are not well known. This situation can be improved by including details of specific individual responsibilities in the safety program.

Responsibility may be defined as an individual's obligation to carry out assigned duties. Authority implies the right to make decisions and the power to direct others. Responsibility and authority can be delegated to subordinates, giving them the right to act for superiors. It is important to note that, while some responsibilities can be delegated, the superior remains accountable for seeing that they are carried out.

Individual responsibilities apply to every employee in the workplace, including the Managing Director. When DMR (safety coordinator) has been appointed, his/her responsibilities are well spelled out. All employees know exactly what is expected of each individual in health and safety terms.

To fulfill their individual responsibilities, the people must:

- know what these responsibilities are (communication required)

- have sufficient authority to carry them out (organizational issue)
- have the required ability and competence (training or certification required)

Once all these criteria have been met, safety performance can be assessed by each individual's supervisor on an equal basis with other key job elements. Health and safety is not just an extra part of an employee's job: it is an integral, full-time component of each individual's responsibilities.

Responsibilities of employees:

Responsibilities of employees include:

- using personal protection and safety equipment as required by the organisation
- following safe work procedures
- knowing and complying with all regulations
- reporting any injury or illness immediately
- reporting unsafe acts and unsafe conditions
- participating in joint health and safety committees

Responsibilities of first-line supervisors:

Responsibilities of first-line supervisors include:

- instructing employees to follow safe work practices
- enforcing health and safety regulations
- correcting unsafe acts and unsafe conditions
- ensuring that only authorized, adequately trained employees operate equipment
- reporting and investigating all accidents/incidents
- inspecting own area and taking remedial action to minimize or eliminate hazards
- ensuring equipment is properly maintained
- promoting safety awareness in employees

Responsibilities of management:

Responsibilities of management include:

- providing a safe and healthful workplace
- establishing and maintaining a health and safety program
- ensuring employees are trained or certified, as required
- reporting accidents and cases of occupational disease to the appropriate authority
- providing medical and first aid facilities
- ensuring personal protective equipment is available
- providing employees with health and safety information
- supporting supervisors in their health and safety activities
- evaluating health and safety performance of supervisors

Responsibilities of DMR (safety coordinator):

Responsibilities of DMR (safety coordinator) include:

- advising all employees on health and safety matters
- coordinating interdepartmental health and safety activities
- collecting and analyzing health and safety statistics
- providing health and safety training
- conducting research on special problems
- attending health and safety committee meetings as a resource person

The purpose of workplace health and safety committee

An effective safety program needs the cooperative involvement of all employees. An occupational health and safety committee is a forum for cooperative involvement of employees representing both labour and management. Such committees are statutory requirements for organizations of a specified minimum size.

A joint health and safety committee brings together labour's in-depth, practical knowledge of specific jobs and management's larger overview of job interrelationships, general company policies and procedures. This team can be more effective in solving health and safety problems than a single individual.

To function properly, the committee needs an appropriate structure, a clear statement of purpose and duties, and standard procedures for meetings. An employer does this by establishing terms of reference for the committee and by allocating adequate resources.

Essentially, any documentation that helps establish a joint health and safety committee and its role in an organization can be considered a "terms of reference". The employer must establish a committee is organized and operates in compliance with the law, is effective, involves the widest range of employees, and provides resources (e.g., time, money, meeting rooms) so the committee can do its work. These requirements are known as "terms of reference". Common terms of reference include:

- stating senior management's commitment to act on the committee's recommendations
- defining how long a person will serve on the committee (if not specified by legislation)
- establishing how a committee member will be chosen, etc.

More information is available in the Health and Safety Committee documents (later in this document) listed below:

- What is a Joint Health and Safety Committee?
- Joint Health and Safety Committee - Creation
- Joint Health and Safety Committee - Effective and Efficient
- Joint Health and Safety Committee - Measuring Effectiveness
- Joint Health and Safety Committee - Structure

When the committee members have been chosen, the committee should participate in decisions on the details of its structure, duties, and procedures. An early key decision that should be made is the question of reporting structure responsibility.

In a general sense, each committee member is responsible to the chairperson, and the committee as a whole to all employees for fulfilling their duties. However, if prompt follow-up to recommendations is to be expected, one individual should be named as a person in authority. The best choice is usually a member of senior management in the line organization. This individual will have sufficient authority to be able to take or expedite direct action as required.

The joint occupational health and safety committee members should be active participants in the development, implementation, and monitoring of all phases of the health and safety program.

Why correct work procedures are established?

Governmental health and safety regulations represent minimum requirements. In almost all cases, organizations will have to augment these regulations with specific rules. These rules must be followed to achieve a healthful and safe workplace.

We need rules--to protect the health and safety of employees--but there are dangers in having either too few or too many rules. Too few rules may be interpreted as a sign that health and safety are not important, or that common sense is all that is required to achieve them. Too many rules may be seen as not treating employees as thinking adults and makes enforcement of all rules less likely. Following guidelines are followed initially for establishing rules:

- rules should be specific to health safety concerns in the workplace
- the joint occupational health and safety committee should participate in their formulation
- rules should be stated in clearly understandable terms
- rules are best stated in positive terms ("employees shall" not "employees shall not")
- the reasons for the rule should be explained
- rules must be enforceable, since disregard for one rule will lead to disregard for others
- rules should be available to all employees in written form, in the languages of communication of employees
- rules should be periodically reviewed to evaluate effectiveness and to make changes for improved effectiveness

Compliance with health and safety rules should be considered a condition of employment. Rules must be explained to new employees when they start work or if they are transferred or retrained. After a suitable interval, these employees should be briefed to ensure they understand the rules applicable to their work.

The employer must establish procedures for dealing with repeat rule violators. Supervisors are responsible for correcting unsafe acts, such as a breach of rules, and they must be supported in this duty. Points that should be considered in establishing procedures on this issue are:

- ensure that employees are aware of the rule
- ensure that employees are not encouraged, coerced, or forced to disregard the rule by fellow employees
- all rules are to be observed
- no violation will be disregarded
- the role of discipline is that of education, not punishment
- action is taken promptly
- while having guidelines for penalties for the first offence or infractions may be desirable, some flexibility is required when applying the guidelines since each case will vary in its circumstances
- action is taken in private, and recorded.

Establishment of correct work procedures

Correct work procedures are the safest way of doing a job, job instruction, monitoring performance, and accident investigation.

Job safety analysis (JSA), also known as "job hazard analysis", is the first step in developing the correct procedure. In this analysis, each task of a specific job is examined to identify hazards and to determine the safest way to do the job. Job safety analysis involves the following steps:

1. select the job
2. break down the job into a sequence of steps

3. identify the hazards
4. define preventive measures

The analysis are conducted on all critical tasks or jobs as a first priority. Critical jobs include:

- those where frequent accidents and injuries occur
- those where severe accidents and injuries occur
- those with a potential for severe injuries
- new or modified jobs
- infrequently performed jobs, such as maintenance

Job safety analysis is generally carried out by observing a worker doing the job. Members of the joint health and safety committee should participate in this process. The reason for the exercise must be clearly explained to the worker, emphasizing that the job, not the individual, is being studied. Another approach, useful in the analysis of infrequently-performed or new jobs, is group discussion.

A procedure has been established (HSP-OHS-01), Procedure for hazard Identification and Risk Assessment for identifying, analyzing and controlling to reduce the risk at work place. Records are maintained as per formats HSF-OSH-01 and HSF-OSH-02.

Applicable Legislation: Labour Rules 2015

Importance of employee orientation

Health and safety education should start with employee orientation when an employee joins the organization or is transferred to a new job. It has been found that inexperienced employees, in general, are involved in accidents at a higher rate than others. While experience can only be gained through time, both health and safety education and job skills training can be used to improve this record. Orientation sessions normally cover such items as explanation of the function of the work unit, organizational relationships, administrative arrangements, and miscellaneous policies and rules.

Items included related to health and safety:

- emergency procedures
- location of first aid stations
- health and safety responsibilities, including those specified by legislation
- reporting of injuries, unsafe conditions and acts
- use of personal protective equipment
- right to refuse hazardous work
- hazards, including those outside own work area
- reasons for each health and safety rule

A new employee can be expected to absorb only a certain amount of information in the first few days. A brochure outlining the points covered in the orientation sessions is useful as a handout to employees. It also serves as a checklist for the person conducting the orientation. A buddy system is a useful follow-up to the initial orientation. This allows for on-the-job reinforcement of the information presented to the new employee. This process promotes the safety awareness of the experienced employees who are the "buddies".

New, inexperienced or transferred employees should be encouraged to ask questions at any time when doubt exists as to correct procedures. The new employee orientation may include a set of questions, such as the following:

- What are the hazards of the job?
- Is job safety training available?
- What safety equipment do I need to do my job?
- Do I need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)? Will I receive training on how to use the PPE?
- What do I do in case of fire or another emergency?
- Where do I find fire extinguishers, first aid kits, first aid rooms and emergency assistance?
- What are my responsibilities regarding health and safety?
- If I notice something wrong, to whom should I report?
- Who is responsible for answering safety-related questions?
- What do I do if I get injured or have an accident?

Soon after the orientation sessions, employees should be assessed on their understanding of the items discussed. In this way, both the quality of training and the level of understanding can be evaluated.

How to design a training program?

The objective of training is to ease the implementation of health and safety policies into specific job practices and to raise awareness and skill levels to an acceptable standard. While all employees can benefit from health and safety training, special attention should be given to the training of supervisors, trainers, and employees.

Occasions when employee training may be required are:

- commencement of employment

- reassignment or transfer to a new job
- introduction of new equipment, processes, or procedures
- inadequate performance

PGCB suggests that the following topics be included in supervisory safety training:

- safety and the supervisor
- know your accident problems
- human relations
- maintaining interest in safety
- instructing for safety
- industrial hygiene
- personal protective equipment
- industrial housekeeping
- material handling and storage
- guarding machines and mechanisms
- hand and portable power tools
- fire protection

The supervisor is generally responsible for much of the training of employees. This duty, however, is often delegated to an experienced worker. To be an effective instructor, an instructor should:

- receive training in how to instruct
- prepare an orderly plan for instruction
- explain reasons why each step must be done in a certain way

All instructors should be taught how to proceed when training a new or inexperienced employee:

- plan the session beforehand; break the job down into steps; have training aids available
- explain what is to be done
- describe all the hazards and protective measures
- demonstrate each step, stress key points, and answer any questions
- have the employee carry out each step, correct errors, and compliment good performance
- check frequently after the employee is working independently to ensure correct performance

Documented correct work procedures are an invaluable aid in job skills training. External sources for training assistance are industry associations, unions, government agencies, and professional consultants.

Workplace inspections

Workplace inspections identify existing or hazards and recommend appropriate corrective action. Health and safety legislation requires workplace inspections as a proactive action to ensure workplace health and safety. Some jurisdictions provide guidelines for doing regular workplace inspections.

Supervisors and employees are responsible for reporting and taking action on unsafe conditions and acts as they are encountered. The frequency of planned formal inspections may be set out in legislation. Records of previous accidents and the potential for serious accidents and injuries are factors to be included when determining if more frequent inspections are needed.

Joint health and safety committee members are obvious choices of personnel to carry out formal inspections, especially if they have received training or certification. Other criteria for selecting the inspection team are:

- knowledge of regulations and procedures
- knowledge of the hazards in the workplace
- experience with work processes involved

Pre-planning any inspection is always worthwhile. Documents, such as previous inspections, accident investigations, maintenance reports, and safety committee minutes, should be consulted. If a checklist is to be used, it should be reviewed and changed to meet specific needs of the workplace. A Procedure for Safety and Health Inspections, HSP-OHS-2, has been established in this regard.

Checklists are useful aids in that they help ensure that no items are overlooked in an inspection. One type of checklist is the "critical parts inventory". This inventory itemizes parts and items that may result in a serious accident if they fail. While many ready-made checklists are available in safety literature, it is best to adapt these to local conditions. The joint health and safety committee should participate in the preparation of these tailor-made checklists.

Inspections serve a useful purpose only if remedial action is taken to correct shortcomings. Causes, not symptoms alone, must be rectified. Corrective action should be taken immediately, with the emphasis on engineering controls, management failures, or need for worker education, whatever applies.

What to report and investigate in case an accident occurs?

Occupational health and safety legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions requires that injuries and certain categories of accidents must be reported. There may be minimum legal requirements for their investigation. Realizing the value in so doing, many organizations investigate lesser accidents (where damage did not involve injuries) and "near misses." The health and safety program should specify:

- what is to be reported
- to whom it will be reported
- how it is reported
- which incidents are investigated
- who will investigate them
- what forms are used
- what training investigators will receive
- what records are to be kept
- what summaries and statistics are to be developed
- how often reports are prepared

Accidents and incidents are investigated so that measures can be taken to prevent a recurrence of similar events. Investigation represents an "after-the-fact" response for any particular mishap. However, a thorough investigation may uncover hazards or problems that can be eliminated "before-the-fact" for the future. After causes have been determined, prompt follow-up action is required to achieve the purpose of the investigation.

What are emergency procedures and how are they established?

Emergency procedures are plans for dealing with emergencies such as fires, explosions, major releases of hazardous materials, violent occurrences, or natural hazards. When such events occur, the urgent need for rapid decisions, shortage of time, lack of resources, and trained personnel can lead to chaos. A Procedure for Emergency Preparedness and Response, HSP-EMR-1, has been established in this regard.

The objective of the plan is to prevent or minimize fatalities, injuries, and damage. The organization and procedures for handling these sudden and unexpected situations has been clearly defined.

The development of the plan follows a logical sequence.

- Compile a list of the hazards (for example: fires, explosions, floods).
- Identify the possible major consequences of each (for example: casualties, damage).
- Determine the required countermeasures (for example: evacuation, rescue, firefighting).
- Inventory the resources needed to carry out the planned actions (for example: medical supplies, rescue equipment, training personnel).
- Based on these considerations, establish the necessary emergency organization and procedures.

Communication, training, and periodic drills are required to ensure adequate performance when the plan must be implemented.

Establishment of medical aid and first aid programs

First aid facilities and the provision of medical aid is generally prescribed under health and safety legislation or employees' compensation legislation. The OSH program must include the following information:

- location of first aid stations and medical facilities
- identification of first aid attendants
- identification of other staff trained in first aid
- policy on pre-employment and follow-up medical examinations
- procedures for transporting injured employees to outside medical facilities
- provision of first aid training
- procedure for recording injuries and illnesses

A policy on return to work after a lost-time accident might appropriately be included in this section of the program. The fact that "light duties" or "modified work" is a controversial issue is all the more reason for the organization to agree on a clear policy that is known by all employees. In some jurisdictions, modified work rules are covered by legislation.

In general, if injured employees are offered alternative employment:

- the work must be suitable and productive
- the worker's physician must agree that such employment will not harm the worker or slow down the recovery
- the worker will pose no threat to other employees
- the policy is applied to off-the-job injuries as well

Under no circumstances should the reduction of severity ratings be a reason for initiating a "modified work" program.

How to promote employee involvement in health and safety programs?

Once the health and safety program has been set in place and the program appears to be running smoothly, effort is still required to maintain enthusiasm and interest. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of health and safety educational techniques depends largely on how much importance management is seen to place on health and safety. Where management, by its actions, has shown that they are sincerely concerned, interest in the program can be maintained at a high level. Accountability for individual performance is a key motivator.

Safety awareness can be enhanced by:

- the setting of realistic goals and monitoring progress
- Distribution of all pertinent information
- individual recognition for superior performance
- general meetings, tailgate talks, and one-on-one coaching
- Well-designed incentive programs

The safety incentive program is probably the most controversial. Most incentive programs are based on the rationale that anything that raises safety awareness is worthwhile. However, there are those who do not share this viewpoint. They maintain that these programs lead to under-reporting of accidents and promoting of the "walking wounded" syndrome. Programs must not encourage employees to remain at work when doing so is unsafe for them due to their physical condition. Therefore, when an incentive program is launched, strict controls must be maintained to prevent this from happening. The joint health and safety committee can play a leading role in activities designed to promote the program and participation of all employees.

Workplace specific items included in occupational health and safety programs

The elements of OH&S programs discussed so far apply to all basic health and safety programs. In addition, specific items may be needed to address workplace specific activities. Examples of such items are:

- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)
- lock out procedures
- hot-work permits
- material handling rules
- plant maintenance
- fire safeguards
- vehicle safety rules
- off-the-job safety
- working alone guidelines
- personal protective equipment requirements
- engineering standards
- purchasing standards
- preventive maintenance

Implementation of occupational health and safety programs

A good health and safety program provides a clear set of guidelines for activities that, if followed rigorously, will reduce accidents and cases of occupational disease. The key to success is the manner in which the program is implemented and maintained.

Senior management must demonstrate commitment and support the program by:

- providing resources such as time, money, and personnel
- ensuring that employees receive training or certification as required
- making all applicable health and safety information available to all employees entitled to receive it
- including health and safety performance as part of employee performances appraisals at all levels
- attending health and safety meetings

The program is communicated to all employees. Special emphasis should be given to new employees, newly appointed supervisors, and new members of the joint health and safety committee. Revisions to policies and procedures should be publicized. The program should be available in a single written document. However, if separate manuals have been developed for various elements, such as accident investigation procedures, their use should be referred to in the main document.

How is the effectiveness of OH&S programs evaluated?

Accident frequency and severity rates are inadequate measures for evaluating the effectiveness of a health and safety program. Cases of occupational disease are under-reported in these statistics. The emphasis is usually on injury-producing accidents alone, not all accidents. Since accidents are rare events, in small organizations the basis for comparison may be limited, especially in small organizations. Chance is a factor both in frequency and severity.

Rather than relying solely on injury rates, or after-the-event measures, it is desirable to use an audit as a before-the-fact measure of the effectiveness of an OH&S program. An audit uses a checklist in which each element is subdivided into a series of questions. Each question is given a weighting factor depending on its importance. Records, observations, interviews, and questionnaires are used to evaluate performance for each sub-element.

Annual audits appear to be the norm, but reviewing critical elements in the program more frequently may be advisable. The audit team, which should include representation from the joint health and safety committee, must receive appropriate training in audit procedures.

The audit identifies weaknesses in the health and safety program. Little is achieved unless a procedure is established to ensure prompt follow-up on deficiencies. This procedure should include provision for target dates for remedial action and checks to confirm completion.

What is a Joint Health & Safety Committee?

In PGCB, occupational health and safety committees are established as Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC).

A joint health and safety committee (JHSC) is a forum for bringing the internal responsibility system into practice. The committee consists of labour and management representatives who meet on a regular basis to deal with health and safety issues. The advantage of a joint committee is that the in-depth practical knowledge of specific tasks (labour) is brought together with the larger overview of company policies, and procedures (management). Another significant benefit is the enhancement of cooperation among all parts of the work force toward solving health and safety problems.

Who is responsible for establishing a joint health and safety committee?

Employers are responsible for establishing workplace health and safety committees. Bangladesh legislation has set guidelines for organizing the committee, the structure of the committee, meeting frequency, and the roles and responsibilities of committee members (refer: Labour Rules 2015).

Employers establish terms of reference applicable to the formation, structure and functioning of the committee. Such terms of reference must ensure:

- compliance with this guideline
- effectiveness of the committee in meeting workplace specific needs
- widest possible employee involvement

What does a joint health and safety committee do?

Activities of the JHSC include:

- participate in development and implementation of programs to protect the employees safety and health,
- deal with employee complaints and suggestions concerning safety and health,
- ensure the maintenance and monitoring of injury and work hazard records,
- monitor and follow-up hazard reports and recommend action,
- set up and promote programs to improve employee training and education,
- participate in all safety and health inquiries and investigations,
- consult with professional and technical experts,
- participate in resolving workplace refusals and work stoppages,
- make recommendations to management for accident prevention and safety program activities, and
- monitor effectiveness of safety programs and procedures.

Is a committee or a representative required by law?

In Bangladesh, Joint Health and Safety Committee or the appointment of representatives is defined in Labour Rules 2015.

What are the sources of legislation regarding joint health and safety committees?

The guidelines for health and safety from the different jurisdictions in the country can be found from following document.

- Labour Rules 2015-(81, 85)

Composition of committee members

Given below- Joint Health & Safety Committee – Structure provides brief information about the committees: when they are necessary, size and representation. This summary is intended to provide basic facts. Please consult the legislation applicable Labour Rules 2015-(81, 85 **তফসিল-৪**) for exact information.

Joint Health & Safety Committee - Creation

How are members on the committee selected?

Health and safety committee consists of worker (employee) and management members. Health and safety legislation specifies how the members on the committee are to be selected. Consult the legislation applicable to your workplace. Generally, the management members are selected by the management (employer). The worker members are selected by employees.

What is the ratio of management to labour members on the committee?

The laws typically state that there should not be more management members on the committee than employee members.

How do I know if the members on the committee are representative of the workplace?

The legislation or collective agreement may specify a minimum and/or maximum number of members usually dependent on the number of employees at the site. Too few employees may mean that all segments of the work force are not represented, while too many members may make the committee hard to manage, resulting in more debate and less action. In deciding the ideal committee size, consider:

- total number of employees
- complexity of the operation
- degree of hazard in work
- whether all segments of work force are represented (management, supervisors, male employees, female employees, office staff)
- whether the committee encompasses adequate knowledge of conditions, processes, practices.

Are members trained or certified in health and safety?

Members should be adequately trained in health and safety in order for them to contribute fully to all committee activities. In some jurisdictions, safety training or certification is required by law for employer and worker members. Items in such training should include:

- committee responsibilities/authority
- occupational health and safety law
- principles of accident causation
- hazard recognition
- job safety analysis
- industrial hygiene
- methods of raising safety awareness
- inspections
- accident investigation
- effective oral communication

Do members have to have relevant work experience and/or training?

Priority might be given to employees with varied work backgrounds and to those involved in the hazardous and complex operations. Employees with long service in the industry will usually have greater appreciation of the overall work carried out and its associated safety problems, and they should therefore be able to contribute more to health and safety committee activities. On the other hand, selection of individuals who have developed bad work habits and tendency to resist change might be avoided.

The joint health and safety committee members may be required to conduct regular inspections of the workplace. People who have undertaken special safety training are particularly qualified (i.e. "certified") to recognize workplace hazards.

Staff with safety-related duties, such as the fire marshal, plant nurse, or industrial hygienist might serve as resource people to help with matters specific to their expertise.

How long does one person serve on the JHSC?

The term of office should strike a balance between a short term where a large number of people are introduced to the JHSC and too long when enthusiasm may fade. No matter how long the term is, a staggered rotation is suggested so that new members come in while others continue such that no more than one half of the committee is "new" at any given time.

What is the safety coordinator's role with the JHSC?

The functions of the safety coordinator and the health and safety committee are closely intertwined, and their relationship must be clearly defined to prevent misunderstanding and conflict. It would seem logical that the safety coordinator should attend every committee meeting, but his/her role at these meetings may be that of resource person, advisor, or guest. Whatever that role is, the committee should not be controlled (or seen as controlled) by the safety coordinator.

Can there be more than one committee at a workplace?

Depending on the number of employees, complexity of operations, or different locations, it may be appropriate to have more than one committee. In very large organizations, a tiered system of committees with a hierarchical reporting arrangement may be in place. This structure has the advantage of assuring full representation without too many members on a single committee.

Are members compensated for time spent on health and safety committee activities?

A committee member is entitled to take time off from his/her regular work duties in order to carry out committee related responsibilities. In some jurisdictions, this is a legislated right and includes time allocation to prepare for the meeting, the meeting itself, and any related activities (such as workplace inspections). With shift work, this provision is especially important to ensure full attendance at meetings and that all committee tasks are carried out.

Can the employer take discriminatory action against a committee member?

A reprisal against a health and safety committee member is against the law. An employer, any person acting on behalf of the employer cannot take discriminatory action against any employee because that person participates in the functions of the committee.

Is there a need to post and maintain records/documents of the meetings?

Minutes of all health and safety committee meetings are required. Some jurisdictions may require the use of specific forms. Some may require that the minutes be forwarded directly to the jurisdiction while others state the records must be made available when a government official requests them. Regardless, keeping a good record of the activities and discussions of the joint health and safety committee is necessary to help ensure that each concern and resolution is documented.

Minutes of meetings are generally circulated to all committee members after approval by both health and safety committee co-chairpersons. One copy should be posted in prominent places in the workplace and the original kept with the records of the committee. It is recommended that the minutes be circulated to committee members and posted within a week from the meeting.

Joint Health & Safety Committee - Structure

Is the purpose of the committee clearly defined?

Roles and responsibilities of JHSC are generally defined, in the health and safety legislation. Specifying a purpose in simple terms is important since this purpose will help later to define the Joint Health and Safety Committee's duties and responsibilities. If too many objectives are specified, it can lead to members having different priorities and energy being spread in different directions at the same time. Reasonable statements established are:

- create and maintain active interest in health and safety and reduce accidents
- discuss and recommend effective action on the workplace accident-causing conditions
- promote an awareness of health and safety issues and an atmosphere of cooperation between management and employees
- help in identifying problems, formulating policy and procedures, monitoring and improving workplace health and safety

Some jurisdictions have legislated to give the committee a degree of power to make decisions on health and safety matters. The end result is greater meaningful worker participation at the level where accidents

and health hazards most commonly happen. The declared purpose of the committee should be included in the company safety policy statement.

Is the committee's authority clearly defined?

The degree of committee's authority should be clearly defined and permanently recorded. When an individual or group is to be responsible for a set of activities, authority to carry out with those responsibilities must also be granted. A degree of responsibility is still necessary if the committee acts only in a consultative role. The provincial or federal law which made the requirement for a health and safety committee may also have declared a minimum amount of authority which that committee must have. Examples would be the right to carry out or participate in inspections and investigations advice on refusal to do unsafe work cases, hold regular meetings, and monitor compliance with regulations. Regular checking of appropriate legislation for such features will be maintained by DMR & MR.

An organization may expand on the minimum authority granted by legislation. Normally such increased authority does not extend to situations where a supervisor's responsibility might be overridden, such as correcting unsafe acts or shutting down an unsafe operation (unless imminent danger exists). However, a committee member should have the right to discuss the resolution of safety matters with any supervisor. As with all health and safety committee matters, the degree of authority should be resolved through joint labour/management discussion.

Do committee activities support, but not replace, the firm's health and safety policy?

A comprehensive list of health and safety committee activities, perhaps combined with full-time safety specialists on staff, might lead an organization into believing that it has fulfilled its safety requirements. It must be clearly understood that this is not so. Safety committee activities are only one part of an overall safety program. Individual responsibilities of management, supervisors, and employees include training, provision of medical and first aid facilities, and preventive maintenance.

To whom does the committee report?

The individual to whom the committee reports should be fully knowledgeable about committee duties, health and safety issues, and committed to the prevention of occupational injuries and illnesses. It might be said that each committee member is accountable to the co-chair persons, and the committee is accountable to all employees. Practically, however, it is necessary to be more specific if prompt follow-up on recommendations is to be expected. The best choice is usually a member of senior management since this person is most likely to be able to take direct action on problems presented to him/her. Staff positions such as the safety coordinator or personnel department may be in a less favourable position to do this.

Does the committee meet regularly?

A committee which does not meet on a regular basis will lose its drive, and will be perceived by employees and management to be of limited effectiveness. It has been established that JHSC must meet at least monthly. Under certain circumstances, such as the initial stages of a newly formed committee or where extraordinary safety problems exist, it may be necessary to meet more often than the monthly schedule. In organizations where accidents appear to be under control, meeting time can still be effectively used for additional safety education for the members. Labour Rules 2015.

Is full attendance achieved at meetings?

Safety committees should not be satisfied at just having a quorum at each meeting, but should strive for full attendance. Obviously this goal is seldom achievable in cases where alternates have not been named. Absenteeism leaves parts of the work force without representation, creates discontinuity in committee activities, indicates a lack of commitment to workplace safety, and reduces the credibility of the committee as a whole.

Are meetings frequently postponed?

Meetings should be scheduled well in advance, ideally for a set time of day and day of week to promote regular attendance and allow preparation time for committee members. Once the time and date is set, the meeting should not be postponed except for emergency reasons. Frequently postponed meetings will be seen as symptoms of lack of interest in safety, lack of management commitment, and lack of committee leadership.

What time of day are meetings held?

The timing of meetings may depend on factors which are difficult to control. For example, when different shifts have to be represented, a time immediately before or after a shift change might be best. Conflicts with the times when many key employees are most needed at their workstation should be avoided if possible. Meetings should be held during the middle of the day shift with provision made to compensate non-day shift employees who are required to attend. Whatever time is chosen, it should be the same for each meeting to promote attendance and to emphasize the importance of health and safety committee activities.

Where are meetings held?

Location of meeting influences both the capability of a committee to do its work and the perception of its importance is the location where the meetings are held. A crowded office or a lunchroom does little to promote effective meetings. Where available, a conference room equipped with appropriate training aids such as flip charts, chalk boards, and screens would be ideal. In any case, the area chosen should be one where meetings can be held under quiet, uninterrupted conditions.

Do meetings start and stop on schedule?

Like all important, well-organized meetings, those of the health and safety committee should start promptly at the designated time. Tardy starts are another warning sign of the lack of interest or commitment by members. On the other hand, since committee members have other duties to perform, meetings should also close at the scheduled time.

Are meetings frequently interrupted?

No matter how carefully it is planned, any meeting which is frequently interrupted by telephone calls, people popping in to discuss something with individuals, or where committee members are called out of the room, will degenerate into a state of disorganization. These disruptions may indicate that the meeting is not very important, and certainly secondary to the normal day-to-day activities in the company.

Is an agenda prepared for each meeting?

An agenda serves both as a guide to members' preparation for the meeting and as an outline for the order of business at the meeting itself. Items which might be considered are:

- roll call
- introduction of visitors
- approval of minutes
- business arising from the minutes (including progress reports on outstanding items)
- reports (inspections, accidents, statistics)
- new business (itemized)
- educational session
- time, date, place of next meeting
- adjournment

What is the procedure for inclusion of new items of business on the agenda?

All employees (management and labour) should be encouraged to submit items to their committee representatives who must be given the opportunity to present the items for discussion. However, since the committee has only a limited time to deal with all health and safety aspects, these items should be screened before the whole committee addresses them. Priorities might be established based on accident experience, inspection reports, or events such as the introduction of new equipment or procedures. Approval of agenda items could be made by the committee as a whole, but here the danger lies in spending too much time on discussing priorities rather than on actual health and safety problems. The decision might best be left to the discretion of the chair persons, as long as both labour and management are represented in the decision.

Agenda is to be distributed to all members well before each meeting?

One of the reasons for preparing an agenda is to allow each member to prepare for the meeting. This preparation may involve discussions with the group he/she represents, study of health and safety problems noted on the agenda, or some other information gathering. Each member needs to know the topics under consideration in order to contribute effectively at the meeting.

Meeting time to be used in a productive manner?

A detailed agenda will help make sure that committee meetings proceed in an orderly manner but there are other considerations as well. The meeting should not be used as a forum for airing general complaints and grievances which have other channels for hearing. Disciplinary and personnel matters should be left to normal line management, personnel department, and union staff to handle while the health and safety committee devotes its attention to health and safety matters.

Individual cases of unsafe acts or conditions ("fix-it" items) are matters which should be routinely resolved through line management not through a health and safety committee. When such items keep recurring during committee meetings, it is an indication of unclear terms of reference or individuals failing to carry out their responsibilities. These items only become an appropriate topic for committee action where an inspection reveals general noncompliance with safety rules/procedures, or when other means to effect corrective action have failed.

On the other hand, committee members must be aware of action taken to resolve cases of "fix-it" items in order to be able to share the information or to take further action as a committee. Disagreement is to be expected on some issues but these should be resolved in a non-adversarial manner based on known facts and logical thinking which lead to reasonable recommendations.

In an environment where labour and management have a history of confrontation, it may be wise to not include in the committee those management and union personnel involved in collective bargaining. It is very difficult for most individuals to switch from the posture of confrontation expected in bargaining to that of mutual cooperation required in health and safety committee work.

How are decisions reached at meetings?

All committee members should understand the manner in which decisions, recommendations, or future committee activities are made. As far as possible decisions should be made by consensus building. Formal voting should be avoided if possible because of its inherent "taking sides" nature. No one individual should have veto power over what will be recommended. The ideal situation would be that consensus is reached through the process of allowing each person to present his/her arguments and having these debated by all committee members. Compromise solutions in the form of more than one recommendation, setting priorities, or involving interim measures may be the way out of a seemingly difficult situation. If general agreement can be achieved, post-decision support from the entire committee and all employees is more likely to follow. The decision-making process is a key element in determining committee unity and developing a spirit of cooperation necessary for it to operate effectively. Labour Rules 2015.

All items of unfinished or new business are to be concluded by specific recommendations for action?

The main function of the health and safety committees is to put forward recommendations. By ending each discussion item with a specific recommendation, it is less likely that they will have to be addressed at meeting after meeting. As with any complex question, a useful way of checking how complete the response is to see if the questions: what, why, how, where, when, and who? are answered. The problem should be stated in clear terms based on known facts.

Normally, recommendations will be made on matters concerning newly reported hazards, known hazards which have not been dealt with by line management, or those requiring large expenditures of money which must be referred to higher authority. The committee should investigate problems thoroughly and try to find their root causes. The recommended solution must be logical, meet all legislative requirements, and be the best possible practical method. The location and time frame should be specified in the recommendation. In some cases, such as when a waiting period is expected while new equipment is purchased and installed, an interim solution may be required.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the individual(s) responsible for taking further action should be named. The health and safety committee should bear in mind that it is trying to sell a recommendation to higher management, and therefore should use all its expertise in presenting a convincing argument.

Are comprehensive minutes of meetings kept?

The minutes of health and safety committee meetings are to keep track of safety problems and to state what recommendations have been made. Minutes also serve to promote safety to all employees and as a permanent record of health and safety committee activities. Items generally included are:

- time and date of meeting
- who attended
- items discussed (reports, problems, statistics, education)
- reasons for recommendations (and counter arguments voiced)
- recommendations (specifying action by whom, by when)
- time and date of next meeting

The minutes should be brief and highlight all recommendations and decisions. The secretary should make notes during the meeting, using the agenda as a guide and write the minutes immediately after, while the proceedings are fresh in his/her memory. An exact copy of everything said is not required or desired, and the minutes should not be so long that they discourage employees from reading them. Format SF-MNG-... is established for recording meeting decisions.

Minutes shall be available to management and committee members, and posted promptly for all employees to read?

Prompt posting of the minutes will show that solutions to safety problems have been followed-up without delay. It also indicates that the health and safety committee is operating efficiently, and emphasizes that safety is a priority item in the organization. Some jurisdictions require that minutes be forwarded to the employer/regulatory agency/organization representing the employees.

For what period of time are minutes kept on file?

Minutes of previous meetings are useful sources of information as they may show trends and reveal problems requiring more investigation, the training of new committee members, or the determination of safety training topics. The length of time they are kept may vary with the frequency of the meetings and other factors but a minimum of two years is suggested.

Joint Health & Safety Committee - Effective and Efficient

Members' duties are to be clearly defined?

Specific duties may vary with the type and size of the organization, industry, number of safety specialist staff in the organization, the firm's accident experience, and the number of committees. Duties of committee members include:

- attending all committee meetings
- promoting the health and safety policy and program
- assisting the employer in resolving worker health and safety complaints
- providing feedback on employees' suggestions
- promoting and monitoring compliance with health and safety regulations
- attempting to raise health and safety standards above legal requirements
- participating in the resolution of work refusals
- assisting in the training of new employees
- participating in the identification and control of workplace hazards
- participating in assessments and the development of control programs for hazardous substances
- participating in accident investigations
- studying safety programs of other companies to enhance own program
- conducting health and safety education programs
- making health and safety recommendations
- carrying out workplace inspections
- advising on personal protective equipment
- maintaining records of accidents and injuries
- monitoring effectiveness of health and safety program
- assisting in the development of organizational health and safety rules
- assisting in the development of safe work procedures
- initiating other activities as indicated by accident experience

Is a list of duties available to each member?

When the duties/tasks of health and safety committee members have been specified, they should be produced in written form, posted in the workplace, and a copy issued to each committee member. In this way members can periodically review their duties. This document may be used as a briefing/training guide for new members, and as an information source for all employees.

Members shall understand what their duties are?

A list of duties in itself cannot be relied upon to ensure that each committee member understands what is required of him. The list of duties should be discussed, either individually or in committee, and each member's understanding ensured.

Members shall carry out their duties?

A well structured health and safety committee with a clear-cut purpose, and composed of knowledgeable members who are fully aware of their responsibilities, will still be ineffective if the committee does not carry out its duties. There may be other reasons for lack of committee effectiveness, but if the problem is internal to the committee, it should be within its power to rectify it. Generally, most people are dedicated to safety, but constraints may be imposed by conflicts of interest, personality, or pressure of external priorities. These situations should be resolved as soon as they become evident, to enable the committee to concentrate on its prime objective--health and safety.

Structure and duties are reviewed periodically and revised when necessary?

The structure of the committee and its duties should be periodically reviewed to see that it is appropriately organized to fulfill its role. Review might be necessary when organizational changes or major physical changes have occurred in the workplace. Since a number of minor changes may take place over time, it may be a good idea to review the responsibilities/duties at set intervals.

Members shall know the extent of their authority?

Each member must know the scope of his/her authority in dealing with safety matters. The written statement of authority should be reviewed with each committee member, and his/her understanding of it confirmed. Following a revision of duties, a review of the health and safety committee's authority should be made to ensure that an appropriate match still exists. Such a review may be necessary when the committee is unable to carry out a specific task due to lack of authority, or when committee members are perceived as regularly exceeding their authority.

Shall members exceed their authority?

Members of the health and safety committee may exceed their authority in carrying out their duties, mainly because of the following two reasons:

- 1) there is something wrong with their stated responsibilities and/or level of authority, or
- 2) there are no clear set of guidelines to follow.

In both cases, a review of the members' duties is necessary. Where one individual is found to regularly exceed his authority, the duties should be reviewed with him and his subsequent performance monitored.

A procedure for recommending dismissal of individual members might be considered in the terms of reference for the committee.

Chairperson's duties and authority shall be clearly specified?

The committee chairperson must assume extra responsibilities. A decision should be made whether these responsibilities are shared all the time or taken in turn (in some jurisdictions, the method of chairing meetings is legislated).

Specific co-chairperson's duties include:

- scheduling meetings, notifying members
- preparing an agenda
- inviting specialists or resource persons as required
- presiding over meeting
- guiding meeting as per agenda
- ensuring all discussion items end with a positive decision
- reviewing and approve the minutes
- assigning projects to members
- ensuring that the committee carries out its function

A list of duties describing the chairperson's responsibilities and authority should be available to all members.

Are the secretary's duties clearly specified?

The secretary's additional responsibilities may vary, depending on several factors. Where only a single chairperson has been appointed, the secretary may be required to assume these duties in his/her absence. The secretary's duties include:

- keeping pertinent records
- reporting on the status of recommendations
- preparing the minutes
- distributing the minutes after approval
- disseminating safety information to members
- assisting the chairperson as required

Joint Health & Safety Committee - Measuring Effectiveness

How does the committee measure its effectiveness?

In order to improve its efforts, a health and safety committee will want to have some measure of its past performance. In this way, weak areas can be strengthened and strong areas maintained. Although an improved health and safety record might be considered the most important measure, the question is not necessarily an easy one to answer. Having clearly defined its purpose and identified specific duties, the committee can audit its work against the following parameters.

Employees shall know who are the members of the committee?

Health and safety legislation generally requires posting the names of the JHSC members. It is always a good practice to do so. If the employees do not know who their health and safety committee members are, it is difficult to communicate their OH&S concerns effectively. To meet his/her responsibilities, a committee member must communicate with the employees in his area on health and safety matters. Each member should take the initiative in making himself/herself known. This can be done by posting health and safety committee members' names and departments on notice boards. New employees can learn who the committee members are during their health and safety orientation training or when the committee member reports at union and management meetings.

Duties and authority of members shall be known to the employees?

The joint efforts of all employees are necessary to achieve maximum results from any safety program. Cooperation is enhanced when everyone understands the ground rules. The duties and authority of health and safety committee members should be posted for all to read, and form a part of new employee indoctrination training.

Is the committee seen by employees as being useful in providing leadership in safety?

If employees see the committee not performing a useful health and safety function, the committee will have trouble in carrying out its' duties effectively. Feedback from employees may decrease, poor cooperation, and even opposition may be experienced. On the other hand, committees with a positive image are able to function effectively. Not only must the committee carry out its responsibilities as effectively as possible, but it should also consider how these actions are viewed in the minds of the employees. Too often, safety committee failures and setbacks quickly become known, while its accomplishments may go relatively unnoticed. Committee members should communicate solutions as well as problems. Both types of discussions raise safety awareness.

Is the committee perceived by management as correctly meeting its responsibilities and authority?

Even though management is represented on the health and safety committee, there may be the perception by other managers that their individual responsibility and authority on safety matters have been taken away, resulting in confrontation, or worse still, abandonment of responsibility. Fortunately, the solution to this problem is relatively simple. Safety committee responsibility and authority should be clearly defined in writing, known to all, and followed by committee members. Managers should recognize that health and safety are legitimate concerns of both labour and management, and joint committees can play an important role in achieving greater worker participation in this vital issue.

Do line supervisors see members as a barrier to worker/supervisor communication in safety?

In most Canadian jurisdictions, the legally recognized communication channel on safety matters is between worker and supervisor. Employees are to report unsafe acts and conditions initially to their immediate supervisor. He/She is responsible for acting on such reports and for directing safe work procedures. Committee members should not interfere with this process, except under special circumstances, such as cases of imminent danger, where immediate corrective action is necessary. After such direct intervention, the member should advise the supervisor as soon as possible. Of course, there should be no restriction on a committee member discussing safety problems with the supervisor or on the supervisor seeking advice or assistance from the Committee.

Do employees perceive the committee as reducing management's responsibility for maintaining a safe workplace?

In some instances, labour opposition to health and safety committees has stemmed from the belief that these committees reduce or remove management's overall responsibility for safety in the workplace. It must be clearly understood by all concerned that management responsibility for safety is in no way diluted or diverted with the formation of a joint health and safety committee.

Are members perceived as enforcers or advisors?

Individual committee members may alienate the employees they represent if they routinely act as enforcers while carrying out their safety duties. Ensuring compliance with safety regulations and procedures is the supervisor's job while the committee member's role is more that of an observer and advisor.

Do employees make suggestions to committee members?

Effective two-way communication ensures that employees are aware of health and safety committee activities and gives them an opportunity to contribute ideas to the committee. When employees regularly make suggestions to committee members, it indicates that the communication channels are open and working the way they should. To maintain this mutual confidence, any worker who raises health or safety matters should be granted the courtesy of a response. When follow-up action is delayed, a report explaining the reasons should be given. Committee members should strive to promote input from employees by providing prompt feedback on all suggestions and ideas.

Does management representation on the committee reflect its strong commitment to safety?

Even with the best efforts of the health and safety committee, any program lacking senior management backing is likely to fail. One of the ways in which management can demonstrate its commitment to safety is in its choice of representatives appointed to the committee. A senior manager, preferably from the line organization, not only can encourage follow-up on recommendations, but also lends credibility to the committee and its activities. However, he should not dominate the committee, but participate as an equal partner.

Does management fully support committee activities by providing comprehensive information, time, facilities, and training?

True management support of committee activities (or lack of it) may be most readily evident in the provision of resources which are necessary for the committee to function effectively. Certain types of support, such as access to pertinent information, may be required under legislation.

Resources which should be made available include:

- notification of accidents and of occupational disease
- information on potentially hazardous materials/processes
- reports on health and safety
- accident and injury statistics
- time to carry out safety duties
- safety reference material
- necessary monitoring equipment
- allocation of space for meetings
- general and specific health and safety training

What proportion of members' time during paid work hours is spent on health and safety activities?

In some jurisdictions, health and safety legislation specifies minimum time to be allowed for JHSC work. It may be difficult to assess accurately what proportion of a member's time is spent on safety activities, but this ratio can serve as another indication of the importance given to safety in the organization. One end of the scale is where the only time is that devoted to committee meetings, while the other is where the committee has adequate time to fully do its job.

How many committee recommendations have been implemented?

If this number is small in relation to those not implemented, it may indicate lack of management commitment to safety, unrealistic recommendations by the committee, or both. Any of these conditions lead to an ineffective committee. For its part, the committee should seek feasible solutions to health and safety problems, and present them in comprehensive form.

When a recommendation is not implemented, are the full reasons given to the committee?

There may be valid reasons why committee recommendations cannot be implemented either immediately or in the long term. A delay might be encountered when new equipment or construction is involved, or when corporate authorization is needed. In any event, after management has considered the proposal, the reasons for not being able to meet the recommendations should be given and together they can explore alternate solutions to the problem. Failure to do this promptly can lead to misunderstandings and a perception of lack of management commitment to safety.

Is the full record of committee recommendations, their implementation, and reasons for non-implementation available to all employees?

In order to maintain a high degree of safety awareness throughout the workplace, all employees need to be kept informed on all safety problems and their solutions. Comprehensive minutes, personal contact with committee members, and reports of meetings will all help to spread this information. Committee successes need to be publicized at least as well as the occasional failures.

